



*Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*

PRIME MINISTER

POSSIBLE ENQUIRY INTO MEDICAL ETHICS

I have seen Norman Fowler's minute of 20 February, and Quintin Hailsham's letter of 25 February, following Mrs Williams' letter to you supporting the need for an enquiry into medical ethics.

I agree with Quintin that it is important to examine and clarify the important moral and theological issues arising from in vitro fertilisation, as well as the legal and medical questions. And, despite our policy of keeping the number of non-departmental public bodies under control, I would not oppose the suggestion that a high-powered advisory committee should be set up to do this job. But I do hope that its terms of reference could be limited to specific issues of which in vitro fertilisation is an example. It is, after all, part of our policy that such bodies should if possible be set up to discharge defined tasks within a limited timescale. A general, standing, Commission on Medical Ethics might well be tempted to range very widely, and might lose sight of the issue which is worrying us.

I am copying this minute to Norman Fowler and to the other recipients of his minute.

*Tank Young*

BARONESS YOUNG  
4 March 1982

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